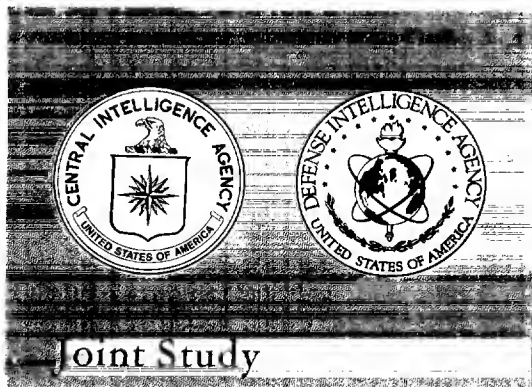


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Weekly Survey of Communist Military Developments in Indochina

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6 March 1974

Fifty-Third Report**WEEKLY SURVEY
OF COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS
IN INDOCHINA***

(This report covers the period
from 27 February through 5 March)

The Key Points

- Troop infiltration increased somewhat during the period: five new regular groups (2,300 troops) – three destined for VC MR 5 along the central coast and two for the COSVN area – were detected starting south.
- Logistic activity continued to be heavy in southern North Vietnam, Laos, and northern South Vietnam during the week.
- While making further progress in constructing the new dual-lane road and petroleum pipeline into the tri-border area, the Communists have reopened their overland supply corridor leading from southern Laos into northeastern Cambodia.
- The Communists have reorganized their command and control structure in Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces.

* This report has been prepared jointly by the Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Defense.

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Preface

This report is the fifty-third in a series summarizing evidence received during the reporting period of (I) Communist efforts to infiltrate new manpower and military supplies toward and into South Vietnam, (II) significant Communist combat activity, and (III) other developments affecting Communist military capabilities in Indochina.

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DETAILS

I. Infiltration and Redeployments of North Vietnamese Personnel and Military Supplies

Personnel Infiltration

1. Troop infiltration during the reporting period increased somewhat over levels observed in recent weeks. Five new regular groups with an aggregate strength of about 2,300 troops were initially detected at Binh Tram (BT) 8 near Vinh, North Vietnam. Three of these groups were going to VC MR 5 on South Vietnam's central coast and two were destined for the COSVN area. The detection of one of the COSVN-bound groups suggests that another undetected group with an estimated 500 troops has started, or soon will start, to this area. As a result, it is also included in infiltration starts (see the table below). In addition to the five groups observed in North Vietnam, a regular group en route to the B-3 Front was detected in the Laotian Panhandle. This group, however, previously was included in starts to the B-3 Front as a "gap-filled" group (see last week's report) and therefore does not increase the number of troops moving to this area. Besides troop infiltration, 11 special-purpose groups with some 650 personnel were detected in North Vietnam and southern Laos. Eight of these groups are moving to various regions of South Vietnam, while the other three -- with about 500 specialists -- are destined for southern Laos or contiguous border areas.

**Comparative Starts of Troops
from North Vietnam, by Destination
1 September - 5 March**

	1972-73	1973-74
Total	79,000	57,000
MR Tri-Thien	20,000	2,000
MR 5	9,000	4,500
B-3 Front	14,000	6,500
COSVN	25,000	21,500
Southern Laos/MR 559	11,000	22,500

2. Between 27 January and the end of February, an unprecedented number of personnel -- more than 13,000, including 11,500 sick and wounded -- moved northward through BT 8. As a result, nearly 17,000 sick

and wounded have been observed moving northward during the first two months of 1974 – more than the total for all of 1973. Because this heavy flow has caused problems such as food shortages at certain communications-liaison stations in North Vietnam, sick and wounded personnel are being routed exclusively through two workcamps while transients continue to be sent north via regular communications-liaison stations.

Redeployments

3. Intercepted North Vietnamese messages indicate that elements of the NVA 234th AAA Regiment operating in southern Laos since February 1973 may have relocated to Kontum Province, South Vietnam. If confirmed, four AAA regiments would be operating in Kontum and Pleiku Provinces of MR 2. The continuing move of AAA units from southern Laos to South Vietnam reflects North Vietnamese intent to provide maximum protection to Communist territory and the major logistics corridor in western South Vietnam.

VC/NVA Replacements for the Delta

4. The VC NVA apparently are preparing to reinforce badly understrength units in the Delta. A recent Khmer Communist (KC) message indicated that as many as 5,000 Vietnamese troops will be moving into the Delta through southern Cambodia this dry season. The North Vietnamese were given such transit rights earlier in return for a substantial aid package delivered to the KC. About 20,000 infiltrators earmarked for the COSVN area – which includes the Delta – have already started south this season, and it is likely that the 5,000 mentioned in the message are part of this total.

Movement of Military Equipment and Supplies

North Vietnam

5. Communist logistic units throughout southern North Vietnam continued to move large quantities of ordnance southward last week. In the Vinh area, COMINT reflected the daily southward movement of 100-200 tons of ammunition and weapons. Typical of the reports received was a COMINT intercept from a storage area north of Vinh reflecting receipt of 145 tons of ordnance, including 115 tons of 130-mm ammunition, and the dispatch of 60 tons on 27 February. Moreover, at month's end, logistic units in the area had at least 750 tons of ordnance in storage, including 320 tons of 140-mm rockets, 210 tons of 130-mm artillery ammunition, and small quantities of other types of ammunition.

Communist and South Vietnamese Regular Combat Forces in South Vietnam

South Vietnam

Regular Combat Forces

		MR I	
VC/NVA ¹	RVNAF ²	VC/NVA	RVNAF
187,000	372,000	87,000	103,000
		325th	VNMC
		324B	Airborne
		304th	1st
		711th	2nd
		2nd ³	3rd
		673rd AAA	Regional Forces

1. Includes VC/NVA personnel in ground combat, combat support, and air defense units and local force companies and platoons.

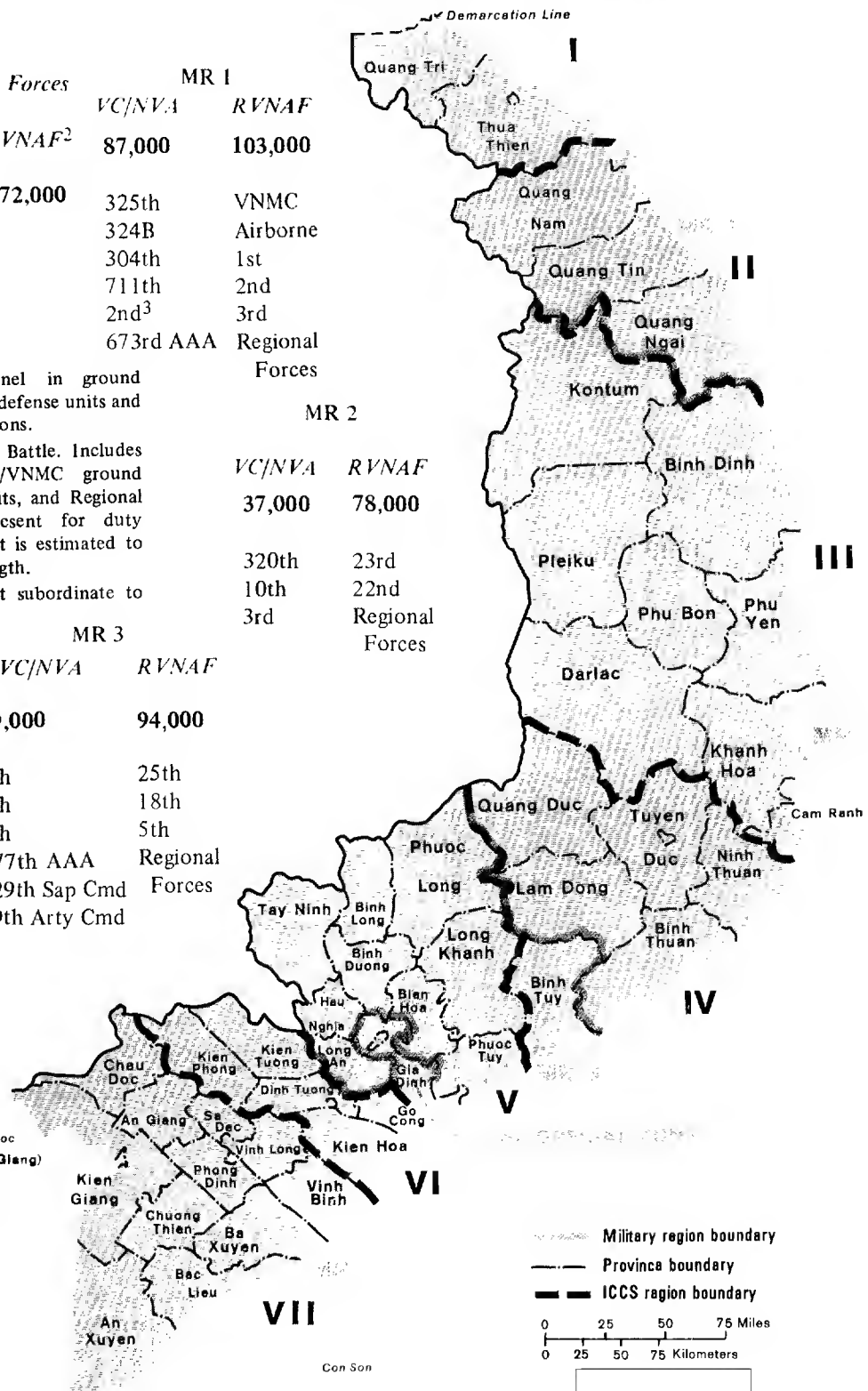
2. RVNAF Ground Order of Battle. Includes assigned personnel in ARVN/VNMC ground combat and combat support units, and Regional Force battalions. Although present for duty strength is no longer available, it is estimated to be about 85% of assigned strength.

3. Only one infantry regiment subordinate to the division.

MR 3	
VC/NVA	RVNAF
39,000	94,000

9th	25th
7th	18th
5th	5th
377th AAA	Regional Forces
429th Sap Cmd	
69th Arty Cmd	

MR 4	
VC/NVA	RVNAF
24,000	97,000
1st ³	21st
	9th
	7th
	Regional Forces



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6. Besides shipping supplies southward, North Vietnamese logistic units also handled a considerable volume of cargo destined for northern Laos. [] at least 150 tons of ordnance including ammunition for antiaircraft and field artillery and anti-tank weapons were shipped to BT 11 along Route 7.

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7. Farther south, in the area between Quang Khe and the DMZ, logistic units were also active [] for example, one unit moved 100 tons of cargo by barge, and in a wrap-up report for the month it was indicated that one element had transported 400 tons of rice. COMINT during the period also revealed that units in the area had more than 740 tons awaiting shipment, including 550 tons of foodstuffs, 100 tons of explosives, and 90 tons of ammunition.

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Laos

8. Highlighting logistic activity in Laos last week was a report from the Engineering Section of Group 472 indicating movement of more than 900 vehicles along the main supply corridor through ford areas in southern Laos [] No indications of cargo type or destination were given, however. Bridges were reported to be crowded as a result of this traffic. [] also reflected heavy traffic levels.

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South Vietnam

9. Photography [] showed Route 9 to be in good condition and probably accommodating heavy traffic. A 4 March report from Headquarters, 541st Engineering Regiment in Quang Tri Province stated that more than 100 truckloads of heavy caliber munitions were moving into southern Laos. [] a subordinate unit of the regiment was directed to ready more than 400 tons of ordnance, including 163 tons of 130-mm artillery ammunition, 68 tons of 140-mm rockets, and 74 tons of 122-mm howitzer ammunition, for shipment to southern Laos. Although the route over which this cargo would travel was not stated, the fact that the 541st Engineering Regiment operates in Quang Tri Province strongly suggests that the cargo would move along Route 9 into Laos. Farther south, field analysis [] photography indicates that Route 613 in Kontum Province is in good condition and sustaining heavy traffic.

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Cambodia

10. Aerial photography [] indicates that in recent weeks Communist road crews and bulldozers have reopened the overland supply

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corridor leading from southern Laos into northeastern Cambodia. A seasonal sharp drop in the water level of the Tonle Kong River, which parallels the overland crossborder route, apparently caused the Communists to reopen Routes 110/975 to vehicular traffic.

11. Following the closure of Sihanoukville Port to the VC/NVA in 1970, the overland supply route from Laos functioned as the major logistic channel for military supplies going to COSVN-directed units in southern South Vietnam and Cambodia. The opening this dry season of a new dual-lane road and petroleum pipeline system through the Laotian Panhandle into the western highlands of South Vietnam -- where it joins another new logistic route leading to COSVN (see III, below) -- appeared to make the longer Cambodian route redundant for Communist needs. The reopening of Route 975 to Stung Treng and points farther south, however, suggests that the Communists intend not only to keep their resupply options to COSVN open, but also to continue support to the KC.

II. Significant Communist Combat Activity

12. Overall combat activity during the last week declined significantly from about 100 incidents per day during the previous two-week period to 83 daily enemy violations last week. Most activity continues to occur in the Delta (MR 4) where ARVN "nibbling" operations against Communist base areas have provoked several major clashes. Most incidents, however, continue to consist of minor harassing actions, attacks by fire, and ground probes.

III. Other Developments Affecting Communist Military Capabilities in Indochina

Communists Continue Work on New Dual-Lane Road and Pipeline in Laos

13. North Vietnamese engineers continue construction of the new dual-lane road and petroleum pipeline system running through southern Laos to the tri-border area. Photography [] showed seven additional miles of dual-lane road and seven support areas with about 160 structures in the rugged Ban Karai Pass near the North Vietnamese border. [] photography shows a new dual-lane road being constructed through the Ban Raving Pass west of the DMZ. Farther south, [] photography showed the petroleum pipeline system extending from its last known terminus in Laos some four miles into Cambodia to within one mile of the South Vietnamese border (see the transportation map).

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*Reorganization of North Vietnamese Command and Control
of Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces*

14. Reporting from COMINT and collateral sources [redacted] confirms that the B-5 Front Headquarters has been redesignated the Tri-Thien Military Region Headquarters. The redesignation apparently was completed in the fall of 1973. The new headquarters has overall military and administrative responsibility for Communist combat units located in the northern provinces of MR 1. This has resulted from the consolidation of the administrative functions exercised by the former Military Region Tri-Thien-Hue and the acquisition of tactical control from the former B-5 Front. This completes the realignment of Communist command and control in northern MR 1 that began in mid-1972.

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ANNEX

INFILTRATION OF NORTH VIETNAMESE PERSONNEL
TO THE SOUTH

Since the beginning of the cease-fire settlement for South Vietnam, almost 121,000 North Vietnamese troops and specialists have infiltrated southward. Nearly 96,000 of this total have started south since 27 January 1973, while the other 25,000 were moving in the pipeline on that date. Since 15 June 1973, when the original accord was reaffirmed, almost 70,000 troops and specialists have been sent south. The following table shows the number of North Vietnamese troops starting south, by month and destination, since 1 January 1973.

Number of Troops Entering the Pipeline Destined
for South Vietnam, Southern Laos, and Cambodia
Since 1 January 1973¹

	COSVN	B-3 Front	MR 5	MR Tri- Thien	Southern Laos/ MR 559	Total
Total	34,500	12,000	11,500	14,000	26,500	98,500
1973						
Jan-Mar	12,000	5,500	4,000	5,000	1,000	27,500
Apr-Jun	1,000	....	....	7,000	1,500	9,500
Jul-Aug	....	....	3,000	....	1,500	4,500
Sep	....	....	2,000	2,000	3,000	7,000
Oct	....	....	....	....	14,000	14,000
Nov	1,000	1,000	....	....	5,500	7,500
Dec	3,500	1,000	....	....	....	4,500
1974						
Jan	10,000	3,000	....	....	....	13,000
Feb	5,500	1,500	1,500	....	....	8,500
Mar 1-5	1,500	....	1,000	....	....	2,500

1. Excluding special-purpose personnel. The totals are rounded to the nearest 500.

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